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# Down By The Little Creek



13 4 1

## Chapter 1 by Fanwizard

One after the other, the blood red rose petals fall into the little creek, floating downstream, swept away by the strong current.

Then, the leaves follow, each one expanding slightly in the clear water, the color darkening from the shade of ivy to emeralds. The eager current sweeps them away almost immediately.

The stem, long and slender as a beanstalk, is the final one to say goodbye, creating a small splash as it falls from my hands into the water.

Now, just why was I dropping parts of a flower in a creek?

Good question.

Well, I was sitting on a branch in a tree that hangs right over the creek, which is a very small creek but is one of the prettiest spots in the forest (if you know where to look), and there just happened to be a rose bush nearby with the reddest roses anyone's ever seen. I even cut roses from it once and brought it to my teacher and momma and little sister on separate occasions.

In mid to late April, that was the best time to see baby geese and ducklings. Once, I even saw a little baby gosling, lost and following a family of ducks, with a bossy duckling that kept attacking the gosling. The gosling kept whistling, calling out for its momma, and finally, I somewhat

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Two years ago, I had stumbled upon this clearing. I was alone, and had intended on taking my favorite path through the forest, the one that went through the center and split into two. Instead, I had spent the entire day there. The grass never seemed to be itchy, the mosquitos never bit, and the creek never seemed to be dirty or hot.

Alone, I sat, on the tree, my legs dangling over, right above the creek. It occurred to me if I shifted for just a second, I fall right into the creek.

Not that I hadn't it before.

From this same branch, I had jumped in, on purpose, one year ago, on that kind of day that fries everyone to death, the one that can literally fry an egg on the sidewalk. It was the same kind of day that you think that you can see the heat curling off the sidewalk in waves. The water was cold and felt good on that day.

I had never showed anyone the clearing. It was my special place. For all the times that anyone walked through the forest, no one could find it on their first try and go back another time and find it again. Even my best friend, Lily, didn't know it existed (even though I did once bring her a robin's egg shell that was so blue, Lily almost believed that it was painted. It wasn't).

We did everything with each other, and knew everything about each other, which just proved how secretive and special this clearing was to me.

*Plunk!*

And down I fell into the water.

“Olive, where’ve you been?” Momma asked me once I walked into the kitchen, half soaking wet and dripping water as I walked.

My name’s Olivia Hazel, but everyone calls me Olive. I have two sisters, one named Willow Rose, who’s the youngest, and one named Magnolia Lila, but we call her Maggie. Together, we’re the tree sisters (pun intended).

“It was hot out, and I accidentally fell into some water,” I explained, wringing out my hair. A few drops landed on the floor.

“Not in here you don’t,” Momma pointed her finger to the door. “I just swept the floor clean. Outside. And don’t be so loud. Your poppa’s taking a nap.”

I knew not to argue. Momma might look like a sweet lady, but she was stubborn as a mule and

yes, Momma pushed people.

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I really had done my best to wring the water out of my hair and clothes, but they still dripped water and were damp despite the blazing sun above and my best attempts. It wasn't that the water was dirty, yet still, my flip flops made a squishing noise as I walked.

Squish.

Squish.

Squish.

Once I was certain that even Momma couldn't wring out any more water, I headed back inside.

This time, Momma didn't say anything, as I kicked off my black flip flops. As soon as Momma saw my shoes, she would set them outside to dry.

I headed upstairs to my room, where I grabbed my hairdryer and kept blowing, running my hands occasionally through my hair, before it was finally dry. Then, I peeled off my damp clothes, dried myself off, then opened my drawers and grabbed dry clothes. I ran a comb through, wincing at the knots, when Maggie poked her head into my room.

Maggie was fourteen, three years older than I was. She was tall and slender, resembling a willow tree, with straight hair cut to her chin in a bob. She ignored me in public and yelled at me at home, always trying to boss Willow and me around. Normally, Maggie had an expressionless face the majority of the time, neither smiling nor frowning, sometimes having a scowl or smirk. "Where were you?" Maggie asked, leaning again the door frame, her arms crossed over her chest. "Because you weren't home, I had to vacuum your room and wash the lunch dishes in your absenteeism."

Maggie always used fancy words around me, always showing off her large vocabulary.

Whenever I didn't know some absurdly long word that she did, Maggie would always insist that I had a small vocabulary and smirk at me.

"And weren't you wearing something different this morning?" Maggie raised one eyebrow at me, yet another talent that she had and I didn't.

"I was, but I got wet when I accidentally fell into some water," I scowled. "And why do you care?"

"Next time you vanish after lunch, clean your own room," Maggie snapped. "I'm not the maid."

She stormed off.

I found Willow in the backyard, sitting in her green chair. She crossed her arms and was surrounded by children in paper and manila bags.

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Willow was a drifter, a woman who had traveled the world, and it made all the difference in the world. She had a kind of magic about her, and I could feel it when I was around her. She had a gentle touch, and I could feel it when I was around her. She had a gentle touch, and I could feel it when I was around her.

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how thick the eyebrows were. She still loved Disney movies, no matter how many times she watched them, even if she was eight. Willow's interests were so different from each other that I felt that my little sister was almost like a junkyard, filled with so many different things that it was hard to keep track (bugs, dinosaurs, the planets, Titanic, Abraham Lincoln, mermaids, princesses, stories, art, etc).

"Hey, Willow."

Willow looked up. Her next creation was a mermaid, based on the golden hair, the lavender tail, and the blue flower in her hair (Momma has the Little Mermaid to blame). It wasn't finished yet, but she had only the tail to finish coloring, lined with rows and rows of scales.

"Hi," Willow relaxed, realizing it wasn't Maggie come to hide her markers, as she picked up the light purple and continued coloring. "Wanna hear this one?"

"Sure." I heard every story that Willow had ever dreamed of, and seen every picture that she had drawn. Sometimes, I helped her design a certain princess dress.

"This one is about a human girl. She finds a magical book in the attic of her grandma's house, and that turns her into a mermaid. I want to name her Emily, but I might also name her Eleanor, Ellie for short. So basically, she's trying to find her way back to the human world."

"Ellie's much better," I reassured Willow.

The wind became stronger, suddenly swooping down and blowing some of Willow's drawings and stories to the side. I ran after them, as Willow scrambled for the ones closest to her, brushing off the grass stains on her shorts while she was at it.

As I picked up the last drawing, I wondered if Maggie had done the same thing for me, as I sat in the grass, scribbling with a fat crayon in my chubby toddler hand, and every single time that the wind became strong, Maggie chased after them while I clapped my hands.

(Then again, Maggie barely even admitted that she once wanted me as a sister/playmate. I only learned that from Momma and Poppa's constant stories, over and over, until they had been drilled into my head. Most people could recite who was who on a football team. I could recite Momma and Poppa's stories about me being a baby.)

"So, do you like it?" Willow asked.

"It's great, kiddo," I ruffled her hair, and she flashed a sweet smile, the same adorable smile that

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"You better make some good use out of yourself and weed my vegetable garden, missy!"

I glanced down at Willow, oblivious to the shouting as she happily erased and drew, erased and drew.

"Yes, Momma," I mumbled under my breath as I tromped through the grass to the garden.

When Momma and Poppa first moved into this house, one of the first things that Momma had done was start a vegetable garden. She'd always had a green thumb and loved gardening. Grandmomma claimed the day that Momma had been born, the flowers had never looked brighter and that as soon as Momma touched a flower, it stopped wilting. On her birthday, all her friends sent her some plants. Even now, Momma was best known for the garden, and even from the front yard, you could see the garden blooming, and smell the flowers in the spring and summer.

I knelt down, digging my fingernails into the dirt and pulling, the weeds coming out almost immediately.

As I continued weeding, the weeds collecting in a large pile.

A shadow fell over me. When I looked up, I was met with a blast of cold water to my face.

Maggie, smirking, her hand holding the hose, blasted me again, then laughed. "You said it was hot outside. I thought I'd do my baby sister a little favor."

I sputtered out water, then wiped the water from my face with one hand. "That's not doing me a favor, and it's not hot enough to spray COLD water in my face!" I glared at her.

Maggie simply cocked her head to the side, her fingers shifting on the hose, then raised one eyebrow. "Says who?"

"Says me," I insisted.

"So, nobody right?"

"Hahaha, very funny."

"I'm being honest to my dear sweet sister. Always want the best for little Olive," Maggie cooed, then dropped the hose and strutted away.

I glanced at the hose then at Maggie's retreating figure. I lunged for the hose, then blasted the figure now moving away.

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